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ABSTRACT

Extracted from a doctoral thesis on young children's emergent literacy, this paper describes the literacy development of one five-year-old subject. The paper first describes the subject's home environment, her relationships with family members, and her early reading experience and literacy development. Transcripts illustrating her home reading experiences and samples of her writing are included. The paper then describes the kindergarten environment that the subject entered following five months of home observation and details her free play activities and literacy activities during circle time and work time. The paper concludes with a comparison of the literacy experiences in the two settings, noting that they differed mainly in terms of content and the nature of the interaction: at home, the "what" of literacy was very much a part of her life and was endowed with meaning; the "what" in kindergarten was carefully controlled and transmitted within a predetermined readiness model, where activities were often not placed in a meaningful context and were not varied according to developmental levels. The paper notes that, overall, the subject's literacy development appeared to be more the result of the activities at home rather than at school. (HTH)

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A Portrait of Wendy

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Large sections of this material have been excerpted directly from my thesis entitled "The Literacy World of Five Young Children".

Names of Characters and Abbreviations

Used in Transcripts

CHARACTER	NAME	ABBREVIATION
Subject	Wendy	W
Wendy's mother	Susan	S
Wendy s father	Bob	B
The kindergarten teacher	Mrs. M. MacDonald	T
The researcher		O.C.

This portrait of Wendy is extracted from my doctoral thesis "The Literacy World of Five Young Children", a study which was constructed to provide data to describe the literacy world of five children, firstly in their home environment (5 months) and then in their kindergarten (10 months). It focused a mediation (Feuerstein et al., 1980)[1] as it related to literacy in these two social contexts. The purpose of this study and the context dictated a qualitative research approach. This paper will describe the literacy development of one of the subjects, Wendy.

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[1]A description of a mediated learning experience is in Appendix 1.

For Wendy literacy experiences in the two settings differed mainly in terms of content and the nature of the interaction. In the home the "what" of literacy was very much a part of her life and was endowed with meaning. In contrast, the "what" of kindergarten was carefully controlled and transmitted within a predetermined readiness model, where activities were often not placed in a meaningful context in her life world and levels were not varied according to individual differences. Her literacy progression over the fifteen months of the study appeared to be as a result of literacy activities in her home rather than her school. This study supports the view that literacy develops best in relational contexts which are appropriately meaningful to the young child.

Phase One - The Home Environment

The research had just begun, so I was more than a little nervous as I approached Wendy's home for the first time. As both parents worked an evening visit was arranged. The three children were ready for bed but were curious about the "visitor". Conversation flowed from soccer to reading to nannies to my study. Both parents were really interested in the research and were keen to participate. Bob kept asking me what my purpose was.

B: Are you comparing the home and the school?
Do you think schools ignore home background
and treat all the children the same way?

Bob and Susan really made me feel welcome and said I could visit at any time. Wendy was a beautiful fair-haired child with bright blue eyes. She had a quiet smile and I did so look forward to observing this child over the coming year.

Wendy in her Social Setting

Wendy was the middle child of a family of two girls and one boy. Her sister, Marion, was 8 years old and her brother, Michael was 2 years old. Both parents, Bob and Susan, were university graduates and worked full-time. A nanny was employed to take care of the children from early morning till about 6 p.m. on weekdays.

Evenings and weekends were very much family times when joint activities such as sport, camping, shopping, etc. dominated. Wendy was very independent, dressed herself, made her bed and tidied her room. When she completed a puzzle she carefully put it back in the puzzle cupboard. Wendy appeared to be well-liked and was considered by many to be a well-adjusted child.

Nanny No.1: She is a lovely child. She has it all. She never loses her temper and is the best of the three children.

At times Wendy was very much a middle child.

Nanny No.1: Her older sister can be very demanding and so is the baby. Her parents try to give her plenty of attention but sometimes she misses out. Often during the day she asks if it is time to spend some time with her. She loves to do a jigsaw with me and talks all the time. Even when I watch television with her she talks all the time. She really enjoys our visits.

Wendy looked up to Marion who taught her things, read to her and brought her books from the school library.

Wendy's relationship with Marion is illustrated in the following description of a visit in August when I observed Wendy playing in the

basement. She went over to the blackboard and said, "I m drawing a clock and Marion usually draws it and I have to tell her the numbers." Wendy constantly played with her sister whom she looked upon as an expert in many things. Often when she showed off something she had made she said either, "Marion gave me this" or, "Marion helped me to make this." Later, when Marion came downstairs Wendy said to her, "Please put my clock up and put the hands on." Marion drew the clock and Wendy said, "I told you Marion could do it." Marion drew the clock at two o'clock and said, "That's two o'clock, Wendy."

Wendy was very loving and patient with her baby brother. While watching Sesame Street one day, Michael stood in front of the screen, blocking her view. She gently said, "Mike, please may you move?" When this didn't work, she got his music box, wound it up and said, "Come on and get it, Mike."

Later that morning she also helped him with an alphabet game, saying, "Mike, do you know where it goes?" She helped him to put a piece in the correct position and then said, "Good boy for trying."

Wendy attended a private playgroup daily where a regular storytime session was conducted but there was no formal instruction in reading or writing. Naming art works was, however, encouraged. She really enjoyed the playgroup where the director considered her to be, "a sweet darling child, so full of ideas and such a beautiful painter".

Although she had an excellent vocabulary and command of language, she sometimes had pronunciation difficulties. The speech therapist who examined her at playgroup felt sure she would grow out of this.

She used to share a bedroom with Michael but now had one of her own. She had many toys, some of which were kept upstairs in her bedroom, some in the cupboards near the family room, and some downstairs in the playroom in the basement.

In the summer months Wendy spent considerable time outdoors in the garden, where there were swings, a slide, climbing ropes, balls and her bicycle. She had always maintained good health and had not experienced problems with hearing or vision.

Early Reading Experience and Literacy Development

Wendy's home environment could certainly be described as being book oriented. Both her parents enjoyed reading and could be seen reading newspapers, novels and magazines regularly in the home. Almost every room in the house contained books. Story reading was considered to be very important both by Wendy's parents, her sister and her nanny. She had been read to from early age often in the company of her older sister. Bedtime reading was shared between Mom and Dad. Susan commented on the books Wendy liked, "Her favorite changes constantly. Recently we had a whole month of 'Tigger in the Forest' but her favorite just now is 'Chicken Little'." Nanny often read to her in the afternoons when Michael was asleep as she considered reading to children to be very important. These reading situations were characterized by sharing and enjoyment and were not looked upon as reading instruction. Her sister, Marion, did, however, try to teach her to read by eye-voice matching but Wendy did not appear to enjoy this at this point in time.

From the following transcript of Susan reading a bedtime story ("In a People's House") to Wendy, we see what book sharing meant to this child.

W: "Come inside ...

S: ... Mr. Bird," said the mouse.

W: ... Mr. Bird," said the mouse.

S: Fall and crash, he's going to do both, isn't he?
And another thing it's time you knew. A - what's that?
(Pointing to a picture)

W: People's House

S: has ...

W: people

S: too. "And now Mr. Bird you know," said the mouse,
"you know what there is in a ...

W: People's House."

S: Right, good girl.

Re-reading of a favorite story was a shared experience from beginning to end with Wendy observing and emulating her mother.

S: That's right, that's books. And lights and lamps and cats and hats and books ...

W: books

S: mirrors, marbles ...

W: shirts

Susan paused to encourage both prediction, echo reading and completion reading.

S: I'll show you ...

W: I do -
I'll show you ...

Wendy self-corrected.

W: what there is in the in ...

S: the people

W: in a

S: people

W: people

S: house

W: house.

Susan did not correct approximations.

S: scissors

W: scissors

S: needle

W: needle

S: what else?

W: b ...

S: buttons.

Wendy accessed the initial sound in the word "buttons".

S: A

W: A

S: It's the same as on that page.

W: people's ...

W: popcorn

S: peanuts

W: peanuts

S: That's peanuts and that's popcorn.

W: popcorn

Susan focused Wendy's attention on the print.

W: people's house.

S: Right, good girl.

S: Bureau drawers and ...

W: and books.

S: That's right, that s books.

Wendy's correct responses were praised.

Later in the same month, Wendy was observed reading this story on her own to her mother. Her rendition of a favorite story demonstrated her ability to take the main sequence of the plot, maintain its development completely and reproduce its meaning exactly.

Text	Wendy
"Come inside Mr. Bird," said the mouse. I'll show you what there is in a people house."	"Come in," said Mr. Mouse to Mr. Bird in the people s house. "I will show you what there is in a people's house, said the mouse to the bird.

Although she altered the verbs in the passage she maintained the original tense of these in her substitutions.

Text	Wendy
... things like roller skates and stairs	Here are some stairs. Here are some roller skates.

From her frequent sharing of the reading of this story she was able to retell it by partially using her own language and partially the language of the story itself. She at times matched words to pictures and used her knowledge of oral language to coherently join the story together.

Text	Wendy
These are doughnuts.	Here, here are some doughnuts round.

At times she realized that story language differed from oral language.

Text	Wendy
Here s a ceiling,	Here's a ceiling,
here s a floor.	here's a floor.

Wendy had developed an understanding of the relationship between the print on the page and what was being read. She no longer saw reading a story as being the same as telling it. At times her reading was beyond matching on the basis of pictures. Her reading was no longer "contextually dependent" (Biemiller, 1970).

As she became increasingly confident at the word level, through re-reading a favorite story co-operatively with her parents on many occasions, her reading had become more measured. It had become more arhythmic. Voice pointing and finger pointing had appeared. To reproduce a favorite story she now used non-visual information consisting of her knowledge of the syntactic, semantic and intonation systems of written and oral language and visual information consisting of her knowledge of the graphophonic system of the language.

The following transcript was recorded during the bedtime reading of a new book. This time the reader was her dad. Wendy chose the book and snuggled up close to him on the couch. The reading began of a delightful story by Frank Muir. Wendy was attentive during the entire reading. There were, however, frequent stops as Bob checked if Wendy understood a particular word. Bob carefully monitored

understanding and encouraged constant interaction.

B: Do you know what "exterminate" means?

Wendy shook her head.

B: To get rid of. For example, getting rid of mosquitoes.

Concepts were developed and meaning linked into the child s own experience.

B: What s a greenhouse? What do you use them for?

W: Plants and tomato plants.

B: Why?

W: If you don't want to put them in your garden.

B: Who do you know has a greenhouse?

W: Grandma and Papa.

B: What do they have in it?

W: Tomato plants - a plant they gave to me and a plant to Marion.

Sometimes it was Wendy who initiated a search for meaning.

W: What is croquet?

B: You hit a ball through hoops. Grandma and Papa have one and we must borrow it.

W: You must hammer in the hoops first. Friends have one.

B: Yes, that was last year.

At the end of this story, Wendy laughed, turned the book back to the title page and read, "What a Mess the Good", pointing to each word as she said it. Wendy's parents used different strategies when sharing a book with her. If it was a new story understanding was the focus, whereas with a well-known favorite participation in the reading was the main aim.

After story sharing, Wendy often read the story herself using picture clues and predicting meaningfully. She was prepared at any time of the day to spend a long time with books. She also often read along with the Disneyland records and books, sometimes echo reading and sometimes mumble reading. I observed her also reading along with the Fisher Price record of "Hiawatha". She selected the book and the record, set up the equipment and settled herself on the sofa to read along. She applied the strategies she had learned with book sharing and joined in when she knew a line of print (co-operative reading). When she was not able to eye-voice match or predict text from memory she echo read or mumble read. To complete the story she added an additional sentence of her own."He gave Hiawatha a ride all the way to the bank of the river" (pointing to the final picture). She then showed me two other favorite read-along records and said, "I know this is the "Toy Maker" because I can see the soldier and the hats." Here she used picture clues.

For the other record she processed the print in the title, saying, "THE is the - ug - ugly duckling." With the word ugly she demonstrated a strategy she could access to unlock the pronunciation of a word. She analysed using a syllable and synthesized to decode orally. On many other occasions I observed her accessing both visual memory and sound to decode words. This was particularly noticeable when she played with letters and wrote or watched television. During a "Sesame Street" program which featured the letter P, Wendy said, "We have a piano. It starts with P."

Wendy sometimes watched television in the afternoon and chatted a lot during the programs. Her favorites were "Mr. Rogers" and "Sesame Street."

W: After "Sesame Street" is the "Electric Light Company"
but I hate it 'cause there's lots of words I can't read.

Wendy had a set of magnetic letters on the refrigerator. As she moved letters around one day, she made the following comments,

W: Wendy is my name. There is Y. It's in my name.
R is in Marion s name. There's a N. A and N and a little N and F. At last I found an E. This is a big T and a small T. (Pointing to a lower case P) This could be a P or a Q or a B or a D if they are turned around. The small S is a different color from the big S. A B can be a B or a D. If you turn a book upside down you won't be able to read. You would think a D is a P. S would be backwards. The O would be all right but the W would be a M.

This sequence shows that Wendy knew upper and lower case letters and revealed her interest in form as she experimented with letter shapes. She would also write "in the air" to reinforce her concepts of shape.

Wendy had well formed concepts about reading and differentiated between the oral and silent mode. She defined oral reading as, "They have a book in their hands and they are talking. You can also read like big people, saying it to yourself," and silent as, "Sometimes they read to themselves when they are waiting for the supper to cook."

On one of my visits Wendy told me that a particular book was difficult if you had to go to the washroom. I asked her what she meant and she explained that you lost the place because the pages weren't numbered in this book. She was also very sensitive to the intonation of the reader. When Bob read "Leo the Lop" to her she corrected him as follows,

B: What you doing that for?

W: No, no, Dad. Whatcha doin' that for?

She remembered how this line was said in the Walt Disney movie of Bambi which she had viewed with her mom.

Wendy, then, had developed extensive knowledge about print partly from her book sharing and television viewing, as she interacted with a competent user of print. She also had developed a wide range of strategies which she applied to re-reading her favorite stories. By sharing her reading she was able to move from an initial strategy of reconstructing the stories in her own language to retrieving them maintaining both a high quality of meaning reproduction and a high degree of verbal similarity. She at times switched to a measured reading-like behavior where she began to match eye, ear and voice with the print on the page. By taking notice of the graphic information on a page she gave herself the opportunity to learn a great deal more about the process of reading. This eye, ear and voice matching provided her with an opportunity to gain a sophisticated level of control over the eye movements necessary for skilled reading. She gained mastery over the precise directional and word-space-word matching skills essential to early reading development. She had begun the complex task of learning to match sounds-to-letters, to identify significant features of words and parts of words, and to eventually develop a repertoire of letter-to-sound correspondences essential as part of the range of strategies needed to read independently.

Writing. Wendy's extensive book knowledge, letter and word knowledge and awareness of sound also manifested themselves as she wrote. Susan's initial comment about her daughter being a writer

turned out to be very accurate. She liked to write her name, words and sentences and often wrote letters, notes and cards for special occasions (Figure 1). Wendy showed awareness of function as well as form.

Figure 1: Wendy writes a card to her sister.

As can be seen in Figure 1, her writing contained a mixture of upper and lower case letters.

Wendy often wrote for a purpose (Figure 2) as writing appeared to be part of her cultural experience.

W: Mom wrote this on a piece of paper and I copied it down.

I didn't copy "Wendy" 'cause I could do it (Wendy) myself.

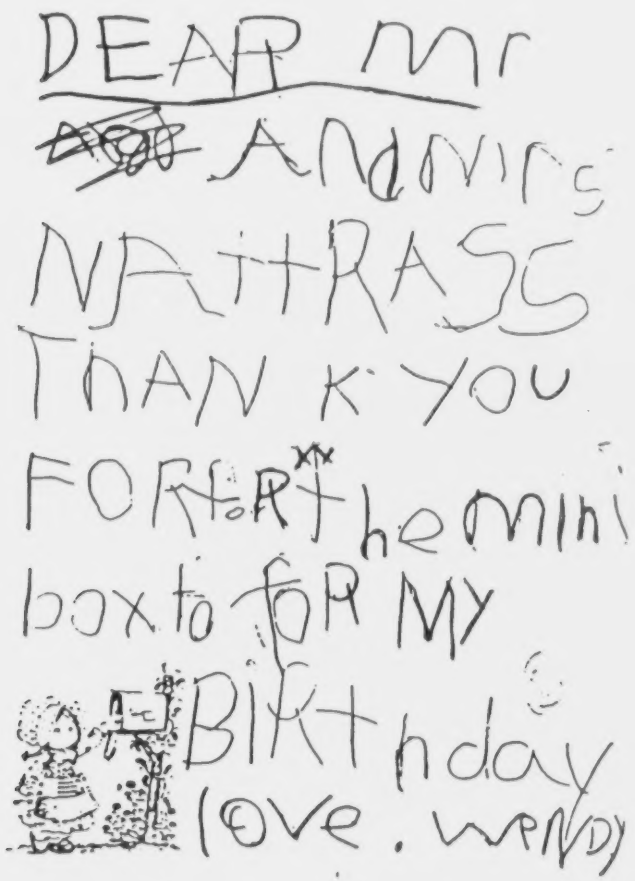

Figure 2: Wendy writes a thank you letter.

When she showed me the letter reproduced in Figure 2, she pointed to DEAR and said, "Sometimes Mommy calls a child dear." "This (pointing to crossing out) is when I accidentally made a big mistake. (She self-corrected.) When you write you put every word a bit far away." This sequence revealed Wendy's realization that when words are combined into word groups a space must be used to signal the end of one word and the beginning of another (Clay, 1975). Susan wrote a copy in capital letters but allowed Wendy to make approximations in her copying and also left self-corrections untouched.

When the family returned from a summer vacation at Disneyland, Wendy drew her favorite character, Minnie Mouse, and signed the drawing "Wendy". She then wrote, saying "Min--eem--ouse. I'm sounding it out." This revealed that she had begun to spell using the most obvious aspect of the speaking/writing interaction, the relationship between sounds and letters. This slowed down her writing as she struggled to choose letters to represent sounds. As a result she often asked adults to spell words for her. Her writing also showed that she was an early phonemic speller.

When I observed Wendy writing, she often talked to herself at the same time revealing her curiosity about and knowledge of print. She could name all the letters of the alphabet in both upper and lower case. She could also distinguish between letters and words.

W: A letter is smaller than a word. A letter makes a word. You can write a letter with words.

She was quite aware of the difference between writing and printing (Figure 3).

W: I don't write. I print. Printing is when you write and you don't connect it together. This is writing. The S and M are joined. You connect all the letters together. You write notes to big people. Some people can't even read. You're writing just now, Moira. I can't read writing. I can only read print.

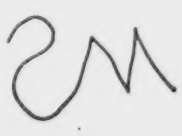

Figure 3: Wendy's "real writing".

As she wrote she vocalized about directionality often writing "in the air" at the same time. Once while writing "Wendy" on a drawing, I observed her writing "Wen", pausing, drawing a small D in the air and saying, "Well, it faces E." She then completed her name. This indicated that she had developed independent strategies for directionality.

One of Wendy's favorite messages was "I love you", which she wrote on cards to her family and her dolls (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Wendy's favorite message.

Environmental Print. Wendy often accompanied her mother on shopping expeditions to the local mall. In fact Susan usually had the three children with her. She constantly sent the girls off to find things they needed. The children were really involved in shopping and were asked what they needed and what they would like.

S: Wendy, go choose a yogurt.

W: I'll choose strawberry.

S: Get me some cheese, Wendy.

(To observer) She knows I always buy the blue label.

W: Blue labels are cheaper.

S: Wendy, which wieners do I buy?

W: (Pointed to the word WIENER on a card) These ones.

Wendy also talked to herself as she walked around. In the vegetable section she read a tomato sign as follows, "Tom - a - toes - tomatoes". She analysed the word into sound units and synthesized these to pronounce the word correctly. Wendy then saw a "Welcome the World" sign (Edmonton was host to the World University Games) and said, "We're going to the Universiade with Nanny." I often observed Wendy reading Universiade signs and no matter what the message was, she said, "Welcome the World".

As they shopped, Susan intentionally focused Wendy's attention on print.

S: How do you know what's in a can?

W: The words tell you.

S: What kind of soup do we need, mushroom?

W: No, we've got mushroom.

S: (Chose minestrone, picked up a can and pointed to the label)

Minestrone. This is Papa's favorite.

Later in the elevator Wendy was asked to press the "down" button, which she did.

Wendy also read instructions on games, labels and machines. On her own cassette player she read the words, "stop", "volume", "play", "forward", "rewind", "begin" and "record".

In August a new nanny was employed and I joined her on a walk from the house to the local mall. As we walked along Wendy pointed

out the school she would be attending soon and said, "It's the end of the world if you don't go to kindergarten. Mom says that anyway." She talked a lot, sometimes pointing to signs she could read. These included, "Safeway" (begins with an S), "Can-a-da" (sounded out first in syliables), "Tomatoes", "NO PARKING", "AIR", "STOP" and "telephone". Print was a meaningful part of this child's life and she had started to develop an extensive sight vocabulary prior to attendance at kindergarten.

Summary

Wendy was an efficient language learner who strove to gain control over both oral and written language, both of which were an integral part of her experience. She had a plentiful supply of books and had access to adults who were pleased to read and re-read stories to her. She constantly saw written language being produced and was herself encouraged to produce and experiment. Her access to environmental print with an accompanying adult provided her with experience of the functional nature of print.

Through her regular experience with books she had become familiar with the pattern of written language. She at times read and at other times exhibited reading-like behavior, where she strove to reproduce meaning in language that only approximated the original. At other times Wendy could be seen to be moving from fluent reading-like behavior to the arhythmical or voice pointing type. Powerful attitudes she had developed at earlier stages, plus the efficient syntactic, semantic and intonation strategies also established, helped her to stay on task and be successful. She could use non-visual sources of information to predict what was on a page and had begun to confirm predictions by using her developing

knowledge of sound-to-letter relationships. By exact matching she could see what she was saying. She could go from the known sound of a word to its representation in print (Doake, 1981, stage three).

The nature of interaction between Wendy and transmitters of print varied according to specific situations. With a shared favorite story and writing, she was encouraged to participate, take risks, predict, ask questions and was reinforced for her attempts whether they were correct or approximations. However, when the transmitters felt she did not understand an idea, concept or word, or that her knowledge could be expanded, the nature of the interaction could be described in terms of mediation. Intentionality, reciprocity, transcendence, mediation of meaning, mediation of competence, control of behavior and sharing characterized the interactive process. Perhaps we see one strategy in operation when Wendy was considered to be practising something she knew, and another when some new knowledge was being transmitted intentionally.

This mediated learning experience (Feuerstein, et al. 1980) was not, of course, present as she listened to stories on cassettes or records. Wendy received input and sometimes gave input, but could not transact with machines including television.

Phase Two - The Kindergarten Environment

In September Wendy entered the kindergarten at the local school. Alloway was a small elementary school with a student population of 200. Mr. Adamson the principal, saw the main function of kindergarten to be its role of introducing children to formalized schooling:

> Kindergarten is for readiness, and not readiness per se but readiness to begin school. The child learns to follow rules and work in small and large groups.

Mr. Adamson put a lot of trust in his kindergarten teacher to set up a good program:

> She must be someone who likes children and is adaptable She should believe in strong home/school communication and be able to work with other people, for example aides and volunteer parents. Anyone who thinks kindergarten is an easy job should try it for a year.

Wendy's first day was a great success. She appeared to quickly learn the routine and fitted in well with the other children. The children were introduced to the kindergarten in small groups, so by the time they came together in their large group of twenty, each child had a fair grasp of the daily program.

Figure 5 illustrates the form that the day took unless on special days or field trips.

Plans

Theme: Color Red — Tuesday, Sept. 20/83

8.53-9.00	Arrival
9.00-9.30	Music (1) Morning Song (2) Colors of my Rainbow, Attendance, Calendar, Weather, Alphabet, Language development - Let's Imagine Color Identify Red Things Red Experience Check
9.30-10.00	Gym - Playground or Locomotion Activities Bathroom Break Snack
10.00-10.30	Red Activity Sheet # 2 Visual Discrimination
10.30-10.45	Recess
10.45-11.15	Self-Selecting Time (centers) Red - Balloons Red - Paint Red - Wall

11.15-11.20	Clean Up
11.20-11.28	Show and Tell - Red Things Story - The Two Reds

Figure 5: A sample of the teacher's daily plans

I observed the children during play, worktime and circle time.

Activities During Free Play

Wendy liked art work, construction toys and writing and drawing on the blackboard and paper. The main feature of these activities was chatting with those beside her. She rarely played in the house or listened to records or tapes and I never observed her with a book. Some days she did not appear to know what to do.

W: What should I do?

OC: What do you usually do?

W: Nothing much.

Wendy wrote her first message in late September and it was to her mother, as in Figure 6.

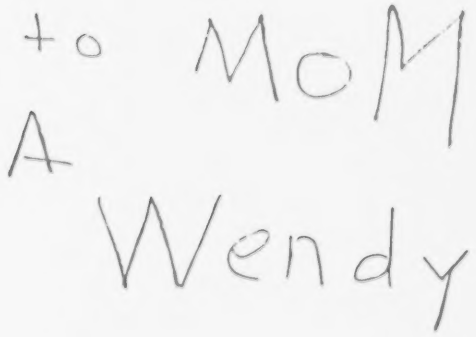

Figure 6: Wendy writes a message to Mom.

W: The pen isn't too good so I will over do it with a felt.

She also labelled a painting "to Marion". Meaning was clearly central in Wendy's writing although she had developed considerable knowledge about the form of written language with which to communicate this meaning.

In Figure 7 we see another message to Mom.

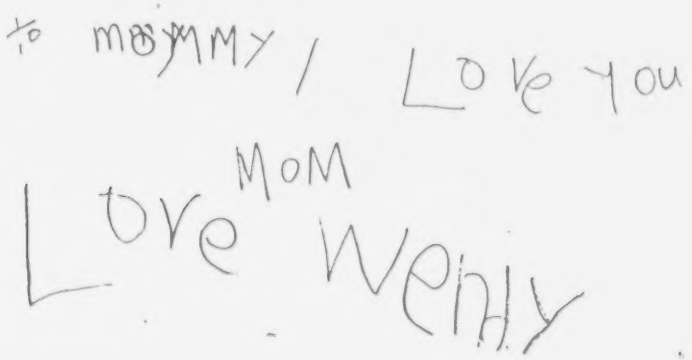

Figure 7: Wendy's writing is corrected.

Wendy started this with "to mmy". The aide looked at it and said, "We don't need that m." Wendy looked puzzled. "But it says mommy," she replied. The early writer had omitted the vowel o, focusing on the repeated /m/, and the aide did not help her to understand the need for the change. I received my first message from her in December (Figure 8).

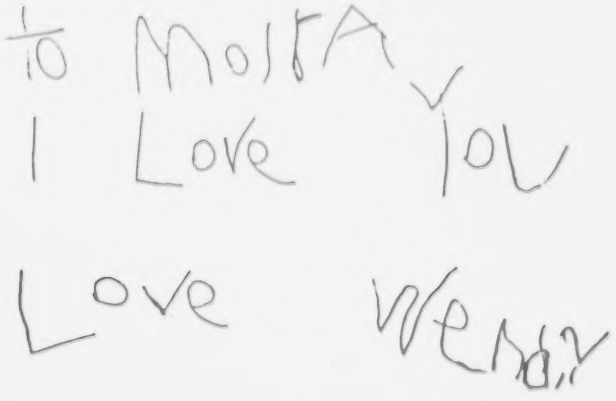

Figure 8: A message to Moira.

At this point in time Wendy copied words, remembered word forms and wrote them independently and invented word forms often correctly. She independently made use of repetitive sentence patterns. She also liked to chat about words, writing, letters and so on. At times I observed her talking to Jeff and Michelle at play time, where she was able to have a positive effect on their ability to write.

One day in October Wendy brought a collection of things her sister had given her to school for show and tell. There was a clip board, a notebook, a pencil and a pencil sharpener. Wendy sat down at a table and was joined by Michelle. She gave her a piece of paper from the clip board. Michelle wrote her name, saying each letter's name as she did.

W: What's the date, Moira?

OC: The twenty-first.

She wrote this on the message pad and then looked at what Marion had written and replied (Figure 9).

From Marion	From Wendy
Date: Oct. 16 1982	Date:
To: Wendy	To: MARION
Message: I Love You	Message: I Love You

Figure 9: Wendy writes to her sister.

Wendy checked back and forth from the first page to her own writing. This material was shown later at show and tell.

Literacy Activities During Circle Time.

Each free play session was followed by a circle time. A main feature of the second circle was show and tell. It was at one of these sessions that Wendy showed the book her sister had given her.

TM: All right, Wendy, what do you have to show and tell this morning?

W: A book. Look what Marion did in it. She did the first page and I did one back to her. A pencil.

TM: What color is it?

W: Gold.

TM: Very good. What color is your board?

W: Pink. I also have the pencil holder and a pencil sharpener.

TM: And what color is your pencil sharpener?

W: Red.

TM: Red.

The child focused on the writing done by herself and her sister. This was what she "showed". The teacher focused on the pencil and asked its color. The teacher took over the show and tell and Wendy was gradually reduced to single word responses. The child had brought a meaningful literacy product to the show and tell and the teacher focused on color.

Literacy Activities During Work Time.

Mrs. MacDonald considered work time to be a very important component of her program.

TM: You know some kindergarten teachers don't give out worksheets because they don't want to do corrections. I just don't know how they identify people who need help. How can you know if everything is oral? Quiet ones just get lost. I really like to check on what I am doing.

Work time was from 10 to 10.30 and any work not completed then had to be completed after recess. Worksheets were on reading readiness,

mathematics readiness and themes. After snack each child chose a seat in the work area and awaited instructions.

In general each worksheet was firstly completed orally with the children chorusing answers, which the teacher often repeated. At no time was the teacher observed accessing the print on these sheets. A great deal of coloring was required. The first writing that was done was copying first names. Later complete names were copied and had to be written on every worksheet. It was never suggested that the children could write their own words. When the teacher or aide were writing Wendy was not required to watch or to read what was written. Corrections were teacher initiated, often without accompanying explanations. At times Wendy was however observed correcting her own worksheets.

W: Oh dear, I did an N instead of a W.

What am I doing?

At work time Wendy mainly enjoyed chatting with friends. As the worksheets were far below her level of ability she could easily complete them correctly while carrying on conversations on other topics.

The Second Term.

Wendy continued to write a lot at home and by February her nanny noted that she read a new book entirely on her own. The kindergarten program in general remained unchanged. There were, however, major changes in literacy transmission. There was a really strong focus on letters of the alphabet and words were written at work time - "H" words for example. Wendy had a collection of 94 favorite words and she could read 93 of them. Library books were available to take

home. By May Wendy could read to the teacher all of the "My Little Story Books" (Ginn, Toronto, 1957). She read well but at times had difficulty with the form of the language as the following transcript shows.

Text: Come to dinner, Father.

Wendy: I woulon t say that. I would ring a tell.

A Comparison of Phase One and Phase Two.

For Wendy literacy experiences in the home and the school differed in the following ways.

1. In her home she often initiated literacy learning whereas in the schooi the teacher was the main initiator and Wendy's attempts to initiate were often not successful.
2. Her parents modified their language to ensure maximum understanding. This was often not so in the kindergarten.
3. In her home learning experiences were age-appropriate but in kindergarten experiences were based on a readiness model despite development levels. As a result the activities Wendy was given were often well below her ability level.
4. Mediated learning characterized many of the literacy interactions in her home whereas school interactions were mainly of the stimulus response variety.
5. School readiness literacy tasks were not grounded in Wendy's own lifeworld and as a result often lacked meaning.
6. In her home she was encouraged to be a risk taker and was rewarded for successful approximations. In the school errors were corrected without explanations and behavior

was not regulated to ensure success.

In terms of literacy development, by the completion of the study Wendy had made substantial gains in literacy concepts and strategies but her progression was as a result of activities in her home environment rather than her school environment. She came to school with numerous concepts about print, books, reading and writing and the literacy program she was offered provided minimal cognitive challenge. It appeared that little attempt was made "to bridge the gap between the relatively abstract formulations of knowledge in the classroom and the children's first hand experience of the world of 'real' activities outside" (Wells, 1981, p.265).

The commonly held assumption that children learn to read only after they enter school must be seriously challenged. The question is not <u>when</u> to start but rather how to continue. Kindergarten and grade one teachers need to know what to look for in the young learner "and allow their observations to guide the implementation of new learning experiences to enable new knowledge to network with existing knowledge" (Juliebö, 1985, p.134).

Appendix 1

When I came across the Feuerstein et al (1980) theory of mediated learning, I became very excited and hypothesized that perhaps this theory coupled with other theories of language interaction (Britton 1973; Lindfors 1980; Moffet and Wagner 1983; Wells 1981, 1983) would prove useful in the analysis of my data. Feuerstein et al (1983) considered a human being to be an open learning system whose intelligence "is responsive to external environmental stimulation" (p.2). The human being learns both from direct exposure to the environment and from mediated learning where "stimuli emitted by the environment are transformed by a "mediating" agent, usually a parent, sibling, or other caregiver" (p.15-16). Feuerstein argued that what is of the utmost importance is simply the transmission of culture but the ability of the human being "to derive maximum benefit from direct exposure to sources of stimulation" (p.19). A mediated learning experience is characterized as follows:

1. ***Sharing:*** This involves focusing on something of mutual interest and can go as high as sharing feelings, impressions, and ideas.
2. ***Intentionality and Reciprocity:*** The mediator shows intent which the recipient responds to.
3. ***Transcendence:*** The mediator "attempts to expose the infant to dimensions of experience which, although not necessary for his immediate satisfaction, are important for the more complex and remote aspects of his development" (Feuerstein et al. 1980,p.20).
4. ***Meaning:*** The mediator selects meaningful, age-appropriate learning experiences.
5. ***Regulation:*** The pace and flow of transmission is carefully monitored to ensure success on the part of the learner.
6. ***Competence:*** The mediator must convey a feeling of competence to the learner.

(To Mediate of Not to Mediate? That is the Question. Language Arts, Volume 62, Number 8, December 1985 p.848-856).

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